

Stop Immediately Inhuman Torture And Killing of Refugees in West Bengal

SUCI'S PROTEST DEMONSTRATION

The recent killing of refugees at Marichjhanpi (Sunderbans) in West Bengal in indiscriminate police firing as a direct action of the vindictive anti-refugee policy of the CPI(M)-led 'Left Front' Government of the State serves as an eye-opener to how extremely anti-people, undemocratic and non-Left has become the conduct of this Government. In its bid to win the confidence of the ruling capitalist class, this 'Left Front' Government does not hesitate to resort to even extreme repressive measures against the toiling people. The repression it had let loose on the struggling electricity workers at Santaldih (Purulia) and on several other legitimate democratic mass movements at different places in the State is a clear testimony to the anti-people attitude and conduct of this Government. Evidently, the 'Left Front', particularly its leader the CPI(M), in its zeal to come in the reckoning of the capitalist class, is unwilling to spare even those unarmed refugees who, driven by this government's inhospitable, insulting and inhuman attitude, went about their way to start life anew in a remote corner infested with extreme natural hazards and danger.

The people of West Bengal will recall how inhumanly the refugees were treated by the previous Congress Governments. These victims of the political decision to partition India at the time of independence were denied their rightful claim to settle in this part of the country and lead a life of dignity and security. The left parties and the democratic minded people of the country had all condemned at that time this most barbarous and contemptible treatment meted out to the helpless destitutes by the then Congress Government. The constituents of the present 'Left Front', who were in the Opposition at that time, together with our party had organised mass movements time and again against the conspiracy of the Congress Government to send the refugees to Dandakaranya. But now saddled in power, the CPI(M) and its allies—let alone making a genuine effort to settle the issues of the long standing refugee problem—are following the same anti-refugee and anti-people policy as of the Congress. The CPI(M) now argues that it is pointless to remind it of its own charges against the Congress at that time since the situation had changed! It should not, therefore, be surprising to find the government led by it forget

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Convention of Trade Unions and Association in Bangalore

Bangalore, Feb. 1, 79 :

A convention of trade unions and Associations was held at Bangalore, on 31.1.79 where most of the central trade unions including UTUC (Lenin Sarani) participated. The convention sought to bring all trade unions and Associations on a common platform to protect the trade union rights, for improvement of service conditions in the factories and on many other demands. More than one hundred fifty delegates from different central trade union and Associations including those from BEL, ITI, HAL, Kirloskar Electric Co., Banks, LIC, Hotel Workers, etc. participated in the convention and all of them unequivocally declared that the working class should

stand united for united action against the onslaught of the government.

UTUC (Lenin Sarani) was represented at the convention by Comrade K. Radhakrishna and Comrade Manmohan. In his address, Comrade Radhakrishna said that the working class movement in our country is at present passing through a critical phase. During the 30 year long Congress misrule, the condition of the working class in India has deteriorated very much. Even minimum Democratic rights were taken away during the 'Emergency'. As the people's anger grew the bourgeoisie of our country were afraid that the wrath of the working class might turn anti-capitalist if it could not

be diverted. The bourgeoisie in their clever design dislodged Mrs. Gandhi and her party and brought the Janata Party to power. The working class must realise that the Janata Party is another alternative of the same ruling bourgeoisie and that by mere change of a government the class character of the state does not alter. Some organisations are spreading illusions that the Janata Party at the Centre is 'Democratic and friendly'. But the brutal attacks on the workers at Bailadilla, Bokaro, Swadeshi Cotton Mills (Kanpur) and other places indicate clearly that the Janata Government is no way better than the previous government in suppressing democratic

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A portion of the huge demonstration at Esplanade East organised by our party in protest against the killing of refugees at Marichjhanpi and attack on the SUCI workers in Canning.

'OPERATION BARGA'

BARGADARS DECEIVED ONCE AGAIN

In the last one and a half year rule of the 'Left Front' Government, two seasons of sowing and harvesting have passed. To what extent the sowing and harvesting vis-a-vis land reform policies of the 'Left Front' Government is effective in the interest of the weaker sections of the peasantry is to be judged against what good these have really brought in the life of the poor peasants, bargadars, share-croppers, and agricultural labourers.

The Land and Land Revenue Minister of West Bengal Mr. Benoy Krishna Choudhury said during this year's harvesting that unlike the previous Congress rule, there will not be any negligence this time in enforcing the Land Reform measures. He alleged that there had been in the Congress regime violation of the land reform law and thereby the interests of the share-croppers, middle and poor peasants, landless peasants and agricultural labourers and the rest of the weaker section of the rural Bengal had been sacrificed. The present government is firm and determined to offer real justice to this poorer section and would do everything to preserve their legal rights.

Now, what is the actual programme of "Operation Barga"? What mechanism has been envisaged by the Government to conduct this Operation? The steps to be taken may be enumerated as follows:

1. Marking the areas in order of priority where share-cropping is most in operation;
2. Forming squads with administrative personnel;
3. Organising sittings in open places in the villages in the evening;
4. Making on-the-spot enquiries in fields of cultivation;
5. Recording the names of the share-croppers.

The list of share-croppers thus prepared is to be hung up and any objection raised from any quarter heard. Then the final list thus prepared is hung and bargadars are supplied with interim certificates. When the

bargadars get hold of final certificates or "Parcha"—it means that they are legally entitled to the rights of share-cropping. Thus, in short, according to government sources is the mechanism of "Operation Barga".

Organised peasant movement is the only means to safeguard the interest of the poor peasants

Let us now see if the promises and the pious wishes of the 'Left Front' Government is of any worth in protecting the interest of the weaker section of the peasantry. Because if pious wishes and promises could protect the interest of the poor peasants and share-croppers then nothing can be said against the Congress regime because they too spared no pains to make similar verbal commitments and assurances. But did those assurances solve the real problems of the rural Bengal and the peasant life? Experience tells the reverse.

The 'Left Front' Government is clamouring much that they have made many novel enactments to protect the interest of the poor peasants. Even if it is a fact, can certain enactments alone solve the real problems? Not that Congress too did not make any legislations. They did, in regard to fixing of minimum wage for agricultural labourers and against the eviction of bargadars and keeping of land above ceiling. But could all this change the scene of rural Bengal? What is our practical experience? In spite of all these the land-owners are still holding thousands of bighas of land—a large number of share-croppers

are being daily evicted from land, the agricultural labourers are being deprived of their minimum wage by the jotedars.

In fact, if the notorious chain, developed through a long period, of the rural vested class and the jotedars in collusion with the administration and the police is not smashed then no amount of pious wishes and assurances and no legislative enactments in the interest of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers can solve all these problems. Because these helpless, unorganised share-croppers, poor peasants and the agricultural labourers who are economically dependent on the jotedars and the rural vested class do not have the courage to stand up against the jotedars and take advantage of the provisions of the laws. That is why during Congress rule, despite legislations to that end the unorganised share-croppers could not in most of the cases, record their rights. Wherever there is no organisation, no pressure of mass movement the poor peasants have to surrender their interest before the oppression of the jotedars and the rural vested interest. On the contrary, wherever the peasants could organise themselves and build up mass movements under revolutionary leadership they could protect their justified rights to a large extent in spite of the attacks of the jotedar, police and administration combine.

Moreover, will it be at all possible for the 'Left Front' government to strictly enforce the land reform measures in the interest of poor peasants and share-croppers as it has declared if it leaves the peasants and share-croppers unorganised and completely dependent on legislations? Furthermore, even if possible at all, will it be desirable? Because, if a reactionary government tomorrow takes away even the little scope

provided by the legislation how will the poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers then protect their rights without organised mass movements?

So, a genuine left party and the government run by it cannot neglect the task of developing and strengthening organised movements of the toiling people under any pretext whatsoever. Naturally, the foremost duty of the 'Left Front' Government was to take effective steps to develop organised peasant movement to smash the vicious chain of the jotedar, police and administration combine if it really meant to safeguard the interest of poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers.

If the 'Left Front' government really meant business it should have declared the policy, "Police shall not interfere in legitimate democratic movement", so that the peasant movement might develop unhampered and unobstructed, free from the interference of police and administration.

Secondly, to enforce the land reform measures aimed at protecting the interest of the share-croppers and poor peasants it ought to have depended not on police and administration, not even the Panchayats only but on united struggles under the leadership of the peasant organisations with long heritage of democratic mass movements. But strangely enough the 'Left Front' government did not take this right and only course to protect and safeguard the interest of the share-croppers and poor peasants. It is thus amply clear that the 'Left Front' government has totally failed to reflect a genuine left outlook in its land reform policy.

No comprehensive land reform policy has been adopted—the peasant organisations of the left parties were not consulted also

Apart from this, if a government really desires to adopt some effective

and comprehensive policy and programme for land reform, it will first of all, have to analyse the problems of agrarian economy and determine the correct way to solve the problems in that perspective. What is the overall picture of our rural life?

In our country, 75% to 80% of the total population depend on land. Most of them lead a life of utter destitution, much below poverty line. In our villages there are, on the one hand, millions of exploited and oppressed poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers while on the other there are a handful of jotedars, in possession of thousands of bighas of land and huge property.

During the last thirty years of Congress rule, the more capitalism has consolidated, the more widespread economic disparity and difference have assumed. With days passing and with capitalist exploitation tightening its grip the majority of the rural population is fast losing land, home and hearth and are fast becoming transformed into semi-proletariat. Simultaneously, a handful of jotedars are grabbing these lands and flourishing. Every year, several lakhs of people through the loss of their lands are swelling the ranks of the landless peasants and agricultural labourers—devoid of any employment and so no income for the greater part of the year. According to an official survey report a few years back, the daily income of an agricultural labourer was 35 paise only. As a result, due to this acute unemployment and poverty, lakhs of unemployed agricultural labourers and destitute peasants are rushing to the cities. Of this multitude of problems of rural life what has become the most acute and pressing is providing employment throughout the year to each and every able-bodied peasant. And in addition to this there are lakhs of share-croppers who have not been able to record

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Did not the 'Left Front' Government know that 'Operation Barga' had no legal validity ?

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Barga (share-cropping) rights. Top of this, the other big problem that is confronting the poor-peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers is their limitless burden of debts. The poor peasants, the share-croppers, the agricultural labourers deeply entrenched in debts have become enslaved to the money-lenders and jotedars. Once an individual takes a loan—he can never pay it off and his sons and grandsons and great grandsons too carry the burden of this debt.

Such being the socio-economic condition what was needed in order to protect the interest of the share-cropper, poor peasants and the agricultural labourers was an effective and comprehensive land reforms programme after taking into account all this problems in detail. To realise this object it was imperative on the part of the 'Left Front' government to form a committee comprising all left parties belonging to the government and the opposition and their peasant organisations. But the 'Left Front' government turned a deaf ear to this proposal of ours, raised many times both inside the Assembly as well as outside.

'Operation Barga' is merely a tactics to hoodwink the people.

Let us now examine the so-called achievements by the 'Left Front' government in enforcing its land reform measures and the harvesting policy. Last year the government raised a very catchy slogan. "He who has cultivated will have the crop." Although the slogan outwardly appears to have some worth in regard to protecting the rights of the poor peasants and the share-croppers, but at that time we exposed thoroughly the underlying significance of it before the people. We showed how the 'Left Front' government under cover of such a broad and general slogan, apparently progressive, had tactfully given the jotedars a free hand

to usurp the crop which they cultivated by forcibly occupying the lands of the poor peasants and the share-croppers. This trickery of the 'Left Front' government having been thoroughly exposed before the people, this year it has invented another catchy slogan—'Operation Barga'.

The government is trying to create an air as if it has provided the share-croppers with an invincible weapon in recording their share-cropping rights. But what is the truth? The 'invincible weapon' that they are claiming to have handed over to the share-croppers and the poor peasants have no legal validity—it does not come under the purview of any section of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act. It is difficult to imagine even that when they have taken so much pains to chalk out such a novel (!) plan for 'barga' recording and when they are equally eager to pose that they are the 'sole' friends of the bargadars, they will not critically examine before declaration whether their so-called progressive plan has any legal validity! When the jotedars in collusion with the administration and the police violated even the legally valid rights of the share-croppers then what good a plan that has no legal validity would do is anybody's guess. Will it be wrong to assume that the 'Left Front' government intentionally retained this legal flaw to help the jotedars to make 'Operation Barga' inoperative by simply filing a complaint in the court of law. The cases filed at the High Court and the verdict passed by the judges in this respect amply confirms the authenticity of what we have said. With reference to the case filed at the High Court challenging the legal basis of 'Operation Barga', the verdict passed by the two judges shows that this 'Operation Barga' has no legal basis. In the said verdict, the two judges stated,

".....The impugned directions relating to 'Operation Barga' are in the nature of administrative directions and the said memo dated 5th July, 1978 has no statutory force. The process of the stages in the settlement operations have been laid down in the relevant statutory Rules.....the state government by issuing an executive fiat cannot propose or revise record of Rights contrary to the said statutory provisions." [The verdict passed by Honourable Justice the Chittatosh Mukherji and Hon. Justice B. C. Roy on 19.12.78 in the case "West Bengal Government and other Vs. Kanailal Shahaj]. As to what has become the fate of the much trumpeted 'Operation Barga' after the verdict of the court, is within anybody's guess. With the slogan 'Operation Barga' the 'Left Front' Government wanted to kill two birds with one stone. They are trying to show the share-croppers and the poor peasants how sympathetic they are to them on the one hand while on the other they are assuring the jotedars that no actual harm is done to them.

Besides this, there is at the back of all this another evil design of the 'Left Front' government. They are trying to make the entire matter appear to be a legal problem and thereby trying to impress upon the people that despite their noble intention, the programme of land reform cannot be enforced because of obstructions created by the court.

The 'Left Front' was fully aware that 'Operation Barga' has no legal validity and the jotedars will take advantage of this to thwart the whole programme. But yet they followed this path of deception only to cover up their real intention from the share-croppers.

Furthermore, by showing that if the provisions of the Land Reforms Act cannot be excluded from the jurisdiction of the

court, which can only be done through amendments of the constitution which in turn can only be done by the central government they can do nothing for the share-croppers in spite of their noble intention since the central government is not in their hands. So they should be sent to the Centre! Or otherwise they have no responsibility!

We must also take note of the dangerous effect which will precipitate, if the powers of the judiciary is curtailed, as is intended in their suggestion to exclude the provisions of the Land Reforms Act from the jurisdiction of the court. This will mean that such power will eventually be vested on the bureaucracy. What will happen then and what good will this administration do to the share-croppers against the interest of the jotedars and the vested class with whom it is linked up in a vicious chain? Anybody with a little common sense can well imagine.

Moreover, while these are there and while there is a growing propensity to vest greater power on the administration, thereby empowering it with autocratic authority the question naturally arises whether such concentration of power in the hands of the administration and simultaneous curtailment of power of the judiciary, will work for the interest of the people or will it lay the foundation of autocracy?

Secondly, is this demand raised from the platform of the mass movement? Because, a pro-people demand also can only be enforced on the strength of mass movement. Has the CPI(M) done anything in this regard? Has the CPI(M), after coming to governmental power, undertaken any responsibility of developing mass movement or even encouraging it? Have they created a situation when even the unwilling administration will work in favour of public interest under pressure of

mass movement? Is it not a fact that, on the contrary, they are discouraging all sorts of mass movement and even going a step further they are suppressing and back-stabbing the very little democratic mass movements that are developing here and there with the help of police brutality, their goondas and their trade union and peasant wings to gain the confidence of the capitalists?

Naturally, there can be but one significance of such a demand—and that is by taking advantage of people's unconsciousness and utilising their left image they are trying to tactfully arm the administration with autocratic power. It amounts to, in the name of safeguarding the interest of the people, concentration of power in the hands of the administration curtailing the power of other democratic institutions and thereby helping the bourgeois class rule to acquire authoritarian character. Can we afford to forget that on the same plea Mrs. Indira Gandhi too during the Emergency entrusted the administration with autocratic power curtailing the power of the judiciary? However, since Mrs. Gandhi did it nakedly people could grasp the design easily. But the CPI(M) is doing the same thing more cunningly and thus serving the interest of the bourgeoisie more effectively.

Non-left outlook in implementing reform programmes

Not only the land reform measures, the CPI(M) is showing totally non-left outlook in the implementation of other reform programmes too. We know that in a capitalist country, a really left government who genuinely cares for people's interest must never depend upon the bureaucracy while carrying out any reform. It must depend upon legitimate democratic mass movements conducive to the revolutionary struggle. Even when it utilises the elected Panchayat Samities

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Our Appeal to the 'Left Front' Government

Do not make Marichjhanpi a prestige issue, stop all sorts of repression and institute All-party Enquiry Committee

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that the refugee problem deserves justice and sympathetic consideration. But the thoroughly vindictive attitude which this Government has adopted towards the refugees and its atrocious treatment of them as subhuman species make the people shudder and wonder in indignation as to how this Government could still unabashedly proclaim itself to be 'Left' and 'pro-people'.

The CPI(M) and the Janata Party are now accusing each other of having instigated the refugees to leave Dandakaranya and migrate to West Bengal. Leaving aside this mutual acrimony there can be no doubt that these refugees who have been repeatedly uprooted from their home and hearth had come to West Bengal about a year back finding the living condition in Dandakaranya unbearable and in the hope of resettling in West Bengal in a hospitable atmosphere in a new regime proclaimed to be 'pro-people'. But sooner their hopes were dashed to ground as they found themselves most unwelcome to the 'Left Front' Government and confronted with the police and administration to stop their entry and stay in the State. The Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, called them pawns in a conspiracy against the 'Left Front' Government and ordered their sending back to Dandakaranya. A number of refugees were killed in police firing at Kashipore in Burdwan for their refusal to board trucks without cover in torrential rains. Even as the government had been claiming that the refugees were voluntarily returning to Dandakaranya several thousands of them, undeterred by the 'Left Front' Government's hostile attitude and determined to

make their own living or die with honour, refused to abide by the government's dictation and made for the deep interior in the jungle of Sunderbans (Southern West Bengal). Struggling against a most hazardous natural surrounding they built up a new settlement at Marichjhanpi, started cultivation, raised embankments for fisheries and built up an economy on their own. The 'Left Front' Government had been trying all along to prevent them from pursuing their course and to forcibly deport them from the State. During the last floods in the State, even as this government pleaded inability to procure an adequate number of boats to rescue the flood-hit people, it had sent no fewer than 26 launches carrying its police force to teach, the obstinate refugees 'a good lesson' for their refusal to return to Dandakaranya as desired by the government. The police had tried to incite the local inhabitants against the new settlers and even forcibly drowned boats carrying drinking water for the refugees. But in the face of our resistance, unity and unyielding spirit of those people, all these operations of the government had failed.

The failure however had only aggravated the vindictive attitude of the CPI(M) and its allies in the 'Left Front'. So, they seized upon the Central Janata Government's instruction to remove the refugees from Marichjhanpi by 31st March this year and even decided to enforce an economic blockade against the refugees. The Chief Minister charged the refugees with "illegal trade" activity causing harm to the economy of the State. It is indeed preposterous and ill-

motivated to charge these struggling people with harmful activity since they have not only been toiling hard for their independent living, but have also brought about an improvement in the economy of the locality without any aid from the government.

The enraged 'Left Front' Government had put a police cordon round the new settlement to prevent food and drinking water from reaching the refugee homes in the hope that the measure would force the obstinate people 'see reason'. But as these undaunted people declined to submit, there was an indiscriminate police firing in which many refugees were killed and many more wounded. Thousands were later arrested, women raped.

No one can charge that the CPI(M) Chief Minister's heart is unmelted by blood. For, he has expressed his regrets for the police firing. But for the refugees, for the toiling masses, and for the democratic minded people, regrets cannot absolve of the crime of bloodshed. They condemn in a voice this most heinous and atrocious act of the 'Left Front' Government and demanded immediate stoppage of repression on the refugees.

Our party has all along urged the 'Left Front' Government to consider the present refugee issue in the background of the longstanding refugee problem and to treat these people with justice and sympathy. But all these have gone unheeded. We had strongly protested against the inhuman treatment meted out to them and against the inhuman economic blockade. The West Bengal State Committee of our Party organised a big mass deputation in Calcutta

on February 3 last to protest against the killing of refugees at Marichjhanpi and the armed attack on our party workers at Canning by the Congress(I) with the backing of the CPI(M) (reported elsewhere in this issue). Thousands of people from all walks of life joined in a big procession condemning the anti-people, undemocratic and non-left conduct of the 'Left Front' Government. When the procession was stopped by the police at the Esplanade East, a delegation from the deputation, comprising the leaders Comrade Ashutosh Banerjee, Comrade Ranjit Dhar, Comrade Provash Ghosh, Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Comrade Debaprasad Sarkar and Comrade Aminuddin Akhand wanted to meet the Chief Minister to submit a memorandum. The memorandum expressed a deep concern and agony at the killing in police firing of the refugees and demanded, among other things, that repression on the refugees at Marichjhanpi be immediately stopped, an all-party committee be formed to inquire into the police firing, the heinous policy of economic blockade against the refugees be immediately withdrawn, compensation be given to those killed and wounded in police firing and the refugee problem be solved with justice and sympathy.

But strangely, neither the Chief Minister nor any other minister was present to receive the delegation and the memorandum even though they had prior information of this mass deputation.

Com. Asutosh Banerjee, member of the West Bengal State Secretariat of our party, addressed the deputation and pointed out that the Chief Minister Mr. Jyoti Basu, was avoiding to listen to the legitimate demands of the people and meet the delegation from the mass deputation exactly in a manner as pursued by the Congress previously. The Chief Minister had written to the Janata

Trade Union Convention in Bangalore

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movements of the people. The recent attack on the striking bank employees at Ahmedabad by the big business with the help of hired goondas and police, and with the complete backing of the government clearly shows the anti-people policy of the Janata Government.

The call of the hour, therefore, is united action and a platform of all trade unions to safeguard the interest of the working class. Only this can ensure the protection of the workers' interest from the onslaughts of the ruling class. But this united platform should not be viewed as an 'issue based' alliance for this is not an end in itself. Rather, the platform should be the stepping stone for furthering working class movements. That's why this united platform should

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leader, Mr. Prafulla Chandra Sen expressing his willingness to discuss the Marichjhanpi issue with him. He had also discussed the issue with the Congress (I) leader, Mr. Subrata Mukherjee. But he was completely unwilling to discuss the same with a left Party, the SUCI. This only showed, Com. Banerjee pointed out, the essential identity of interests of the Janata, the Congress (I) and the CPI(M)—however much these parties may engage outwardly in mutual bickerings. This conduct of the CPI(M) also proves that the party wants to prop up the the Congress (I) and the Janata Party as the opposition parties in the politics of West Bengal.

Cautioning the 'Left Front' Government that the people of West Bengal would one day give it a fitting reply for its non-left conduct, the deputation went back in a procession pledging to stand by the refugees and build up mass movements for their just cause.

JUTE WORKERS' STRUGGLE

A Lesson for establishing Revolutionary Leadership in Mass Movement

Calcutta, 15th Feb. '79 :

Hail the fighting solidarity of the struggling two and a half lakh jute workers of West Bengal. They have been successfully conducting continuous strike-struggle since 5th January last and this is the 42nd day of their strike. In the mean time best and most sincere attempts on the part of different jute workers' unions to settle the 42 days old strike have been made but due to the most adamant attitude of the IJMA (Indian Jute Mills' Association) and the 'Left Front' Government's naked appeasement to it no accord for removing the stalemate has till been reached to and the strike continues.

The most notable thing in this regard is that, as all know, jute barons are behaving in a most adamant and audacious manner while a 'Left Front' government is in power in the State. The government and its Chief Minister have been althrough and particularly in the case of jute strike declaring that this government would stand beside the poor men's struggle. But in practice, the fact is that this 'Left Front' Government is declining to even revoke the DIR order regulating the payment of Additional DA to the jute workers imposed by the previous Congress regime, let alone creating pressure on the adamant jute industrialists to come to a settlement with the workers. This, among others, has caused serious concern among the toiling people of the State in general and the jute workers in particular. And we feel it incumbent on us to bring this fact to the fore.

The jute mill owners are refusing to accept any of the major demands of the workers like increase in Dearness Allowance, introduction of new Grades and Scales, implementation of Raghunath Reddi Award on 'Badli' workers, Bhattacharjee Commission Award, Weekly Payment and House Rent Allowance, reduction of work-load imposed during Emergency and reinstatement of retrenched workers. Over and above, they are pressing for introduction of 21 shifts instead of 18 shifts

and to 'modernise' jute industry thereby to get the sanction of retrenching workers in the name of their so-called 'Modernisation'.

In the tripartite meeting on 30th January last, let alone opposing such stand of the managements, the Labour Minister himself supported the demand for introduction of 20 shifts by the managements meaning thereby increase in work-load on the workers.

In the question of increase in basic salary, the workers have demanded a wage increase of Rs 75/- P. M. while the government is talking over a package deal of Rs 65/- including the House Rent of Rs 15/- in line with the recent settlement in Engineering Industry. But the I.J.M.A. has been offering only Rs 47/- including House Rent and thus a stalemate has been created.

In such a situation, the UTUC (Lenin Sarani) althrough demanded of the government and different jute workers' unions unequivocally requested the government on 14th January last to revoke the DIR order imposed by the then Congress Government on payment of additional DA but the 'Left Front' Government refused to do so although it is well within the purview of this State government.

It is to be mentioned that to the rescue of the jute barons the said D.I.R order was imposed by the Siddhartha Roy

Government in '75 otherwise as per the recommendation of Bhattacharjee Commission on fraud in calculation of Consumer Price Index number the workers would get an additional DA of Rs. 65.75 P.M. This time also if the 'Left Front' Government revokes that D.I.R order regulating the payment of additional DA workers would be automatically entitled to get an additional DA of Rs. 65.75 whereas the government offers Rs 65/- P.M. including basic, dearness allowance and house rent. In the words of Economic and political weekly of 3rd Feb. '79. "Simply the revocation of D.I.R can immediately release Rs. 63 (It should be Rs 65.75—Ed. P. Era) per jute worker but surprisingly the CPI(M)-led government has been conspicuously silent on it. The reported demand of SUCI-controlled UTUC that this be done, has been ignored."

The 'Left Front' Government vociferously claim itself to be left. Then how is that this government is refusing to revoke that anti-worker DIR to the benefit of the jute barons? By this, is not the IJMA getting indulgence in behaving so adamantly and having the audacity of offering a sum of our Rs. 47/- only in all to the jute workers? This attitude of the 'Left Front' Government is really mysterious to the workers.

In view of this situation, Comrade Fatick Ghosh, General Secretary, West Bengal State Committee of UTUC (Lenin Sarani) and President of the Bengal Jute Mill Workers' Union in press statements on 21st January and on 30th January last urged the 'Left Front' Government of the State 'to be serious about the problems and be free of inhibitions, if there be any, to compel the IJMA to 'accept workers' demands immediately'. He also demanded

Some Teachings from COMRADE STALIN

The chief endeavour of the bourgeoisie of all countries and of its reformist hangers-on is to kill in the working class faith in its own strength, faith in the possibility and inevitability of its victory, and thus to perpetuate capitalists slavery. For the bourgeoisie knows that if capitalism has not yet been overthrown and still continues to exist, it owes this not to its own merits, but to the fact that the proletariat still has not enough faith in the possibility of its victory. [Report to the 18th Congress]

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It must be accepted as an axiom that the higher the political level and the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the workers in any branch.....the better and the more fruitful will be the work itself, and the more effective the results of the work; and, vice versa, the lower the political level and Marxist-Leninist understanding of the workers, the greater will be the likelihood of disruption and failure in the work, of the workers themselves becoming shallow and deteriorating into paucity plodders, of their degenerating altogether. [Ibid]

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After the correct line has been laid down, after a correct solution of the problem has been found, success depends on how the work is organised; on the organisation of the struggle for the application of the party line; on the proper selection of personnel; on the way a check is kept on the fulfilment of the decisions of the leading bodies....(that is) after the correct political line has been laid down organisational work decides everything, including the fate of the political line itself its success or failure. [Report to the 17th Congress]

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A proper check on fulfilment of decision is a searchlight which helps to reveal how the apparatus is functioning at any moment, exposing bureaucrats and red-tapists to full view. [Ibid]

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A correct political line is, of course, the primary and the most important thing. But that in itself is not enough. A correct political line is not needed as a declaration, but as something to be carried into effect, we must have cadres, people who understand the political line of the Party, who accept it as their own line, who are able to put it into practice and are capable of answering for it, defending it and fighting for it. [Report to the 18th Congress]

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.....I am prepared to devote to the cause of the working class, to the cause of proletarian revolution and world communism, all my strength, all my faculties and if need be, all my blood, to the very last drop. [Speech delivered on the occasion of the 50th Birthday]

that 'the State Government should immediately revoke the regulating order of DIR for the Bhattacharjee Commission award' but in vain.

Lastly the last tripartite meeting on 8th February '79 thus broke down simply due to the adamant attitude of the IJMA and conspicuously lukewarm attitude of the government in this regard. This has, most

probably, brought the dead end to the persistent attempt of the trade unions to settle the jute strike.

After this, in a joint statement all the seven central trade unions excepting CITU, UTUC (Bowbazar) and TUCC has accused the government of its indifferent attitude and refusal to revoke the DIR order.

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Any reform not conducive to revolutionary movement is a mere self-deception and bourgeois fraud

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to carry forward the reforms it should be guided by this basic outlook. Let us recall what **Comrade Shibdas Ghosh**, one of the greatest Marxist thinkers of this era taught us on what should be the outlook and approach of a real revolutionary party in carrying out reforms while running a bourgeois government.

Comrade Ghosh taught us: This capitalist system, its state structure, will continue to exist and we shall make reforms, shall formulate plans within this very capitalist social system, shall consider the welfare of the people—these are all self-deceptions, these are nothing but deceiving ourselves and others. Struggles for reforms may be conducted for the welfare of the people. But that must have one specific object and that is, all these movements for reforms and the relief measures must wide open the path of the anti-capitalist revolution—must not create a hindrance to that—must never create illusion about this capitalist system, about the parliamentary system—must help, on the contrary, to get rid of any illusion about it. If movements for reforms are conducted with this very object and outlook—the revolutionaries support such a movement, we also do support it. Those reforms which are not conducive to the revolutionary struggle—are mere self-deception—a bourgeois fraud to keep the people subdued under cover of sweet verbiages.

[Speech delivered on People's Liberation Pledge Day, 1967].

All the provisions of the present Harvesting Policy of the 'Left Front' Government to safeguard the interest of the share-croppers were there in the Congress legislation

Let us now examine the guideline for settlement of harvesting disputes—

protection to bargadars and assignees of vested land issued by the Board of Revenue, West Bengal Government.

(1) "Where the dispute is between the land owner and the recorded bargadar (or the bargadar who has got a Barga certificate) the latter should receive full protection from the organisation in harvesting the crop and getting proper share of the produce.

(2) "Though legally there is no distinction between recorded and unrecorded bargadars, so far as the benefits of the land reforms are concerned, there might be difficulties in delivering the benefits to unrecorded bargadars. Attention is drawn to Section 21 B of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act. Section 21 B reads as follows:

"A person lawfully cultivating any land belonging to another person shall be presumed to be a bargadar, is not a member of the family of the other person whose land he cultivated and the burden of proving that such land is in his personal cultivation shall, notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force, lie on the person who alleges that the person cultivating the lands is not a bargadar in respect of such land.

"Therefore, under the law, if any person lawfully cultivates the land of another person is presumed to be a bargadar. He should, therefore, get, all protection under the law.

(3) "A problem may arise if two or more persons claiming as bargadars raise a dispute about harvesting. In all probability one will be the genuine bargadar and the other is a fake one. After local enquiries with the help of Panchayat Samity, Block-level Land Reforms Advisory Committee the crop should be given to the genuine bargadar.

(4) "The possibility of disputes between two bargadars, one who had

been illegally evicted earlier and the other who has been engaged recently cannot be ruled out. As contemplated under Section 19 B (1) (b) of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, the newly engaged bargadar will harvest the crop and share the produce with the old bargadar who had been illegally evicted. Land owners in such cases will not get any of the produce. It is desirable to effect a solution on this line through the good offices of the Panchayat Samity with the help of the respective Gram Panchayat.

(5) "Where the Patta-holder is an eligible person under Section 49 of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, he should be given all protection to harvesting crop and take the entire produce.

(6) "Where the patta-holder is prima-facie a non-eligible person but his patta has not yet been annulled, he should be allowed to harvest the crop, if there is evidence that he raised the crop himself.

(7) "In case where the land reforms machineries have failed to hand over possession of the allotted land to the pattaholder who is an eligible person and where such allotted land has been cultivated illegally by person other than the allottee, efforts should be made to sort-out the problem by effecting amicable compromise through the good offices of the Panchayat Samity."

It has been specifically mentioned in this official circular that in setting all disputes related with harvesting, the advice and suggestion of the Panchayat Samity must be accepted. The government has also expressed the hope that the administration will take care to see that the poorer section of the society who have been so long deprived of their legitimate rights are given full benefits and protection which they are entitled to under the existing laws.

What we would like to point out is that there is nothing new in the above circular. These were all in vogue during Congress regime.

So the problem is not such that there were no legislation for the protection of the interests of the poor peasants and the share-croppers. But despite the legislative provisions, due to absence of conscious and organised peasant movement the jotedars with the help of corrupt administration and police have been violating these provisions to the detriment of the interest of the poor peasants, share-croppers and patta holders.

Naturally, the interest of the poor peasants, share-croppers and the patta holders can be protected by organised movements alone—the combined conspiracy and attack of the jotedars, administration and the police can be resisted by consciously organised peasant struggle. If the CPI(M) were really serious, and meant what they profess they would not have neglected this all important task of building mass movement. But that is what they are doing in order to remain in the good book of the jotedars and the vested class.

To serve effectively the cause of the poor peasants, share-croppers and landless labourers the panchayats must lend an active support to their movements.

This apart, the decision of the 'Left Front' government to delegate the power to settle harvesting dispute to the Panchayats, while completely ignoring the role of the militant peasants' organisations in this regard, cannot be supported by any reason whatsoever.

First, it must be borne in mind that in spite of all sincerity and good intentions, it will not at all be possible to implement any measure which aims at protecting the interest of the exploited rural people through the Panchayat machinery, if

such an endeavour is not backed by legitimate democratic movement. So, in order to successfully implement any such measure the first and foremost task of the Panchayat Samities will be to lend an active support to the legitimate democratic movement of the rural exploited people.

If on the contrary, they neglect the struggle and instead want to confuse the mind of the people by raising the question of legality involved in the matter or encourage them to develop the opportunistic habit of seeking personal privileges by Panchayat members—then this may help in swelling the party rank of the CPI(M) but it will seriously harm what little of pro-movement environment and mental make up is still now left in the villages. And as a result, the jotedars and vested interest will gain to the detriment of revolutionary politics and struggle. We are constrained to note that the 'Left Front' Government is guiding the Panchayats on this very path. They are drawing the people to the politics of personal gain, creating disruption and conflict within their rank, and developing a legalistic attitude among them, at the cost of their pro-movement outlook and mental make up. Heinous conspiracy is being designed against the people to make them apathetic to the revolutionary politics and struggle and to drag them into the politics of all sorts of opportunism and personal gain. Otherwise, had they any genuine desire to protect the interest of the poor peasants and landless labourers by curbing the rural notorious vested clique on the strength of organised peasant movement, they would have attempted running the Panchayats on the basis of close link and co-operation with those militant peasants' organisations which do really possess a glorious role and heritage

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leading mighty democratic struggle of the peasants against the rural vested class. And in that case they would not have restricted the membership of the Land Reform Advisory Committee within the Panchayat members alone, but instead would have included representatives from these peasant organisations and different Left parties as well.

Settling dispute through Panchayats—a naked design of sectarianism, and complete betrayal of administrative neutrality

Secondly, the 'Left Front' Government has succeeded in fulfilling their narrow design of abolishing the administrative neutrality by entrusting the Panchayats with the responsibility of settling the harvesting disputes. In the past as well, during the Congress regime we witnessed similar attempt to convey good bye to the administrative neutrality and use the administration in petty party interest. But even the Congress would be ashamed at the instance set up by the 'Left Front' Government in this regard. With the object of freely using the administrative machinery for petty party interest they have devised a new design—that is, henceforth throughout the state the administration must have to abide by the instructions of the Panchayat Samiti controlled mostly by the party in power. As a result the local administration will no more have even any semblance of administrative neutrality.

Thirdly, there is another aspect to be taken into due cognizance. In many of the Panchayat Samities which are supposed to settle the disputes, the jotedars and persons belonging to the coterie of the vested interest have been elected as the CPI(M) nominees. During the last panchayat election simmering discontent had generated within the CPI(M), because the party with the object of swelling its strength overnight and

Build up mighty peasant movement against the notorious chain of the Jotedar-Police-Administration and the non-left politics of the Government

earning the confidence of the jotedar class in a large scale, gave nominations to the jotedars and other persons with vested interests. That our charge was true has already been confirmed by the fact that in the last Panchayat election, in many areas throughout the State, the dissident sections of the CPI(M) workers, as a protest against the decision of their party, contested their party nominees as independent candidates. So, what verdict such Panchayat Samities would give while settling the disputes relating to harvesting is within anybody's guess.

Shameless patronization of the jotedars and rich peasants, camouflaged by tall talks of protecting the interests of share-croppers and the poor peasants

So, the real picture of the rural Bengal today reveals that the same jotedar class and the vested interest who once under the protection of the Congress Government used police and administration to forcefully evict the share-croppers, loot their crops and deprive the agricultural labourers of their legitimate wages—have now changed their flag, taken shelter under the different constituents of the Left Front, more particularly its biggest constituent, namely the CPI(M) and are perpetrating the same oppression and exploitative measures on the share-croppers and agricultural labourers. A correct analysis of the condition prevailing in the rural Bengal will therefore make it amply clear that under the cover of tall talks of protecting the interest of the share-croppers and poor peasants the 'Left Front' Government, is in reality engaged in defending the interest of the jotedar class and the vested interest. If the policy of the 'Left Front' Government on land reform and harvesting is a real safeguard to protect the

interest of the poor peasant and share croppers, then how the jotedars armed with rifles without license dare to loot their crops and that too in broad day light, as they habitually did in the past during the Congress regime? How the jotedars—even after committing large scale murders, looting the crops that the share croppers sowed at the cost of their life-blood, thereby letting loose a reign of terror among them, dare move scot free in open day light?

Why is the 'Left Front' Government silent on such heinous crimes committed by these people? So, has one yet to accept despite all these facts that the policy of the 'Left Front' Government on land reform and harvesting are anti-jotedar and aimed at protecting the interest of the share-croppers and poor peasants?

Apart from this, the policy of the 'Left Front' Government on collection of levy is also another instance of patronizing the jotedars and vested interest. The 'Left Front' Government has miserably failed to show that little amount of firmness which even the Congress Government once manifested in the past while collecting levy from the jotedars and rich peasants. So, the picture in this field also is far more distressing than that of the past.

In their bid to do a favour to the jotedars and rich peasants, this year the 'Left Front' Government has moved a step ahead and relieved them from the burden of paying any levy. It is stated that apprehending lest there is any short fall in the supply of food-grain to the market due to the devastation caused by the recent flood, the government has to take such a decision. It goes without saying that the declaration of the government to the effect of not collecting levy throughout the state, on the ground that it would not be

feasible to collect the same from the flood affected areas, has made the jotedars the happiest of the lot.

The peasants' movements are being restrained with the help of the Police

Various incidents have already amply confirmed our analysis of the policy of the 'Left-Front' government on land reforms and harvesting.

The innumerable reports that was received daily from the different districts during the last harvesting season, have clearly revealed that the 'Left-Front' government is aiming at arresting any possible growth of organised peasant movement, so that the share-croppers poor peasants and agricultural labourers no more dare to raise their head against the onslaught of the jotedars and the vested interests. Despite this situation wherever any spontaneous resistance movement is developing or the poor peasants, share-croppers and landless labourers being led by our party are mobilising themselves against the jotedars, then and there the 'Left Front' government, just like the previous Congress governments and following their footsteps is taking the side of the jotedars and attempting to crush the movement with the help of police and administration. Not even rare are the instance of suppressing the movement by setting up police camp on the plea of maintaining law and order.

A nefarious game to draw the jotedars within the fold of the party

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that in spite of all the pious wishes that it has expressed, it is not only that the CPI(M) is neither taking any initiative nor even encouraging to develop movements, but it is also trying to create everywhere among the peasants

an apathetic attitude towards mass movements. To speak more precisely, it is aiming at polluting the pro-movement environment throughout the whole of West Bengal.

But side by side with this, we are witnessing another picture also. At times and in some localities, the CPI(M) is mobilising the poor peasants and share-croppers in agitational movement against the jotedars and rich peasants or if necessary even manifesting militant stance while organising such agitation.

But their necessity and the necessity of protecting the interest of the peasants is not one and the same. In fact, this is a double edged knife aimed at killing two birds with one stone. This is a calculated attempt to put pressure on those jotedars, who have not yet changed their affiliation from the Congress to come within the fold of the CPI(M) on the one hand while on the other to encourage disruption among the ranks of the peasants' organisations belonging to other parties by demonstrating a stance of militancy. So, in some localities, where the peasants mostly belong to the organisations of other parties one would witness the workers of the constituents of the 'Left-Front', more particularly of the CPI(M), to speak of organising movement for legitimate wage in high sounding voices but in some other locality, where their own peasants' organisation have a stronghold but where too, the agricultural labourers are being deprived of minimum wages, they feel shy to speak of developing any such movement.

So, from the apparent militant attitude that they manifest in some localities, there, is no reason to conclude that the CPI(M) or the 'Left Front' has any genuine desire to build up legitimate democratic movement of the peasantry. Because in most of these cases, the moment, the rich peasants and jotedars came within the fold of the 'Left Front' the performance of the

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CPI(M) Backed Congress(I) Jotedars' firing on SUCI Demonstration

On the 27th January, last, the Congress (I) backed by the CPI(M), made a dastardly attack on many of our Party workers, at Canning in West Bengal. The assault took place in front of the police, but the police, instead of apprehending the culprits, arrested one of our Party workers and charged many other with false cases. The CPI(M) in connivance with the police and also the Congress (I) and the Janata have assaulted our Party workers at several places in the last one year inflicting grievous injury to many. The incident at Canning is one more in the series and is a glaring example of the anti-people non-left policy of the 'Left Front' government of the State.

It is known to all that in the said area agricultural labourers and poor peasants have been conducting organised legitimate democratic mass movements under the leadership of the SUCI against the jotedars. Failing to break up the movements and the unity of these toiling people through intimidatory tactics and other heinous means, some anti-social elements led by Mr. Barin Roy who is the president of the Congress (I) in the locality and is also at present the CPI(M)-backed Anchal Pradhan of the said area, mounted an onslaught on the 26th January on several of our party workers inflicting serious injury to one. They also looted the local co-operative store.

Next day when a peaceful unarmed procession had been protesting against this attack, a group of 60 to 70 people, led by Mr. Barin Roy, Nirmal Haldar and Bharat Sardar fired indiscriminately on the procession from eight guns and pipeguns. Ten of our

party workers were wounded in the firing. On either days the incidents took place in front of the police camp on the premises of Mr. Barin Roy's house. But the police stood silent spectator at the time of firing. They did not take any statement from the wounded, nor did they arrest the culprits. Instead, the police arrested Comrade Rezaul Naskar, a local organiser of our Party, when he had gone to make a report on the previous day's incident. Not only that, the police has filed false cases against him and many other workers of our party. Though the matter has been repeatedly brought to the notice of the higher authority of the police, no steps have been taken.

On the 3rd February last, our party organised a big mass deputation protesting against this dastardly attack in Canning and the police firing on the refugees at Marichjhani. It was demanded in a memorandum that the culprit jotedars and anti-social elements would have to be arrested immediately, the guilty police personnels punished, the guns of the said jotedars forfeited, Sec. 144 lifted from the said area, those wounded provided with adequate medical treatment and compensation, and all false cases against our Party workers withdrawn. But neither the Chief Minister, nor any other minister were present in office to receive the memorandum, even though they had prior information of the deputation. All those who participated in the mass deputation pledged themselves to build up mass movements to protest against the anti-people policies and conduct of the 'Left Front' Government of the State.

'Operation Barga'

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stage rehearsals of movement at once stopped.

**Organise militant
peasant movement
against the combined
attack of jotedars
police and
administration**

So, whatever the tall talks of the 'Left Front' in the name of developing organised movements of the poor peasants, share-croppers and landless labourers, these sections of the people, from their practical experiences, have realised the truth that whatever attacks the jotedars and vested interest may launch upon them—in the regime of 'Left Front' there is nothing to protect them from such onslaughts except their own conscious organised movement.

If the poor peasants, share-croppers, landless peasants and agricultural labourers sincerely desire to protect their rights against the non-left land reform policy of the Left Front Government vis-a-vis the attack of the notorious clique of the jotedar, police and administration combine, then immediately they have to organise themselves on a wide scale in united movement.

So, we urge them to come forward and build up militant united movement with all their might to protect their hard earned rights and firmly establish their right to live.

And if any one tries to obstruct the growth of such movement and even if such attempts are made in the name of leftism, then with a mind free from any pre-conception they must reject all these pseudo-left, anti-revolutionary forces and rally behind the correct revolutionary leadership.

Jute Workers' Strike

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Whatever may be the fate of this strike struggle of the jute workers, noted seriously that the whole episode in prolonging the jute workers' strike—the audacious behaviour of the IJMA and vis-a-vis the role of the 'Left Front' Government—should never be viewed as an isolated incident.

From the very beginning of its ascending to power 'Left Front' Government led by CPI(M) has been preaching for avoiding strikes and movements, openly assuring the industrialists and business houses of keeping 'peace in industry', totally discarding gherao to the glee of the managements and owning class, advising the workers and employees to 'use strike as the last weapon' and as minimum as possible while retrenchment, lock-out and lay-offs are going on in a rampant way. Side by side, in action, the government in the name of 'maintaining law and order' is openly suppressing the least possible mass movements or workers movements with the help of police and administration, even killing and torturing workers, students and refugees while on the other hand trying to frustrate the workers and people's movements from within with the help of their own mass organisations including the trade unions with an aim to prove themselves

the most able protector of the ruling class interest.

In this back-drop, the jute workers' strike started. The government and the trade unions run by its constituent parties persistently tried to avert the strike. "CITU and its allies had allways tried to avoid the strike, despite the management's obdurate attitude. They were in fact forced to resort to the strike for fear of further isolation" (Ibid). This was the position before the strike started. Even when the strike started and was forced to prolong by the obstinate attitude of the jute barons what the 'Left Front' Government and its supporter trade unions did is certainly no better.

The same paper reports: "The state labour minister's over cautious approach helped the IJMA to virtually ignore the government. At one stage the CITU allegedly decided to settle for a little over Rs. 50, but the attempt was foiled by the SUCI-controlled UTUC and its allies."

Such is the role of the 'Left Front' Government and the role of the trade unions under its political leadership which the jute workers in the State and the working class in general should take into account with necessary lesson and caution while conducting their struggle and every mass movement in future.

Convention of Trade Unions

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be given permanent shape built up on the basis of common agreed minimum programme, code of conduct and norms of behaviour.

In the Convention an Action Committee was formed and it passed certain important resolutions such as withdrawal of the introduction of Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance Bill which will take away the right to strike of the

employees of KSRTC, KEB and BWSSB and to stop police interference in the industrial disputes. It has decided to organise a mass rally before Raj Bhavan and Bidhana Soudha on the first day of the budget session of the state Assembly. The Convention also decided to call a general strike of the workers and employees of the state in March '79. The action committee will meet in near future to work out further course of action in this regard.

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